

Marr, A.E.- Photographing the heron family.

(1906)

A-M [arr]  
1906

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The exercises given herewith may be practiced as much as is desired. They cannot be overdone; they cannot fail in every case to increase health and vital force, and in time to greatly augment one's proficiency at all games of skill.

EXERCISE NO. 1.—Stand easily, arms at the sides. Take full breath, at the same time swaying the body forward.

Then, holding the breath, stretch head upward and backward and the arms downward and backward. (See Fig. 1.) Relax and return to position.

No. 2.—Place arms akimbo, finger tips forward. Now bend head forward upon the chest, and let body follow, at the same time slowly inhaling breath. (See Fig. 2.) If this be done correctly, you will feel the waist expand under your hands. After a moment exhale without holding and return to position.

No. 3.—Stand easily, one foot slightly in advance of the other. Now swing the arms easily up at the sides, swaying the body forward until the arms are extended up over the head, at the same time inhaling full breath. (See Fig. 3.) Then, without holding the breath, swing the arms downward, exhale the breath and bend the body, quite collapsed, head and arms hanging. (See Fig. 4.)

No. 4.—Stand easily, feet somewhat apart, weight upon left foot. Now swing the left arm easily back and forth, allowing it to sweep up higher and higher until it is passing forward and upward as high as shown in Fig. 5, backward as far as you can. Move body slightly in harmony.

Afterward take weight upon right foot and swing right arm in the same way.

No. 5.—Stand with arms hanging at the sides, all the muscles relaxed. Begin to swing the arms slowly back and forth. Let the swing become wider and wider, throwing more and more of the body and

legs into the movement, until the extreme forward movement is like that depicted in Fig. 6.

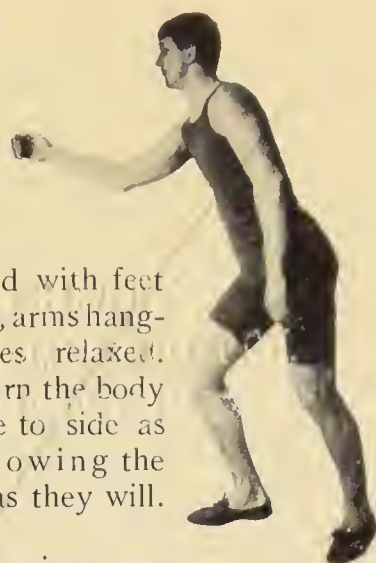
No. 6.—Stand with feet somewhat apart, arms hanging, all muscles relaxed. Now begin to turn the body gently from side to side as on a pivot, allowing the arms to swing as they will. (See Fig. 7.)

In all these exercises, save the first, the one great object is to move as easily, as lightly and with as much swing as possible. The less muscular force used the better. This method of handling the body may be afterward applied to the performance of feats of skill with surprising results.

No. 7.—Tack up against the wall a sheet of white paper upon which has been made with black ink a small circle. Stand near the wall, holding a lead pencil lightly in the right hand. Now with a free motion swing the arm up over the head, and as it sweeps downward try, without in any way interrupting the movement, to so direct it as to make a pencil mark through the circle. (See Fig. 8.) Try the same in other directions, diagonally downward from left to right and from right toward the left, also by making a horizontal sweep both from right to left and from left to right. The same may be tried upward, both directly and diagonally.

In making this movement, the body should also participate in the swing; and all the muscles should be kept as loose and relaxed as possible.

After, by the practice of these movements, the athlete has gained the power of moving easily, he is ready to apply this method of moving to the actual feat in which he is interested. He should go through the motions incidental to this feat repeatedly, working only for ease and freedom; and eventually he will find that in these simple motions lies the secret of success in feats of skill.



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# PHOTOGRAPHING THE HERON FAMILY

BY A. EARL MARR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS E. MARR

IT was the summer before, when engaged in doing some work on a country estate, that I learned of the location of the heron rookery, and, owing to the season being too far advanced then, mentally made a note that I would pay the herons a visit early the next summer, in season to study their family life.

Early on the morning of the tenth of May, I started on my mission, with an assistant who assured me that he was "great on climbing"—and who afterward had a chance—an eight by ten camera, the usual outfit of lenses, etc., and two dozen plates. It might be wise to add here that when visiting herons wear old clothes. We found these, with rubber boots and a plentiful supply of stout cord, as essential as the camera.

After an hour's ride we reached the nearest station, and then followed a walk of nearly two miles with a heavy load and the temperature that of midsummer. The rookery was located in a dense swamp, mostly spruce, with a bottom wet and spongy. We had no uncertainty of mind as to whether we were in the right place, or if the birds were at home. The noise, as we attempted to crawl, push and scratch our way in, was well-nigh deafening.

Our first trip was intended for photographing the eggs and nests, and it was with some trepidation we prepared to ascend the first tree, fearing that the hatching process might be too far advanced, thus losing us the first stage in the series planned. Our doubts were soon dissipated; the nest contained four eggs, about the size of hens' eggs, and light green in color.

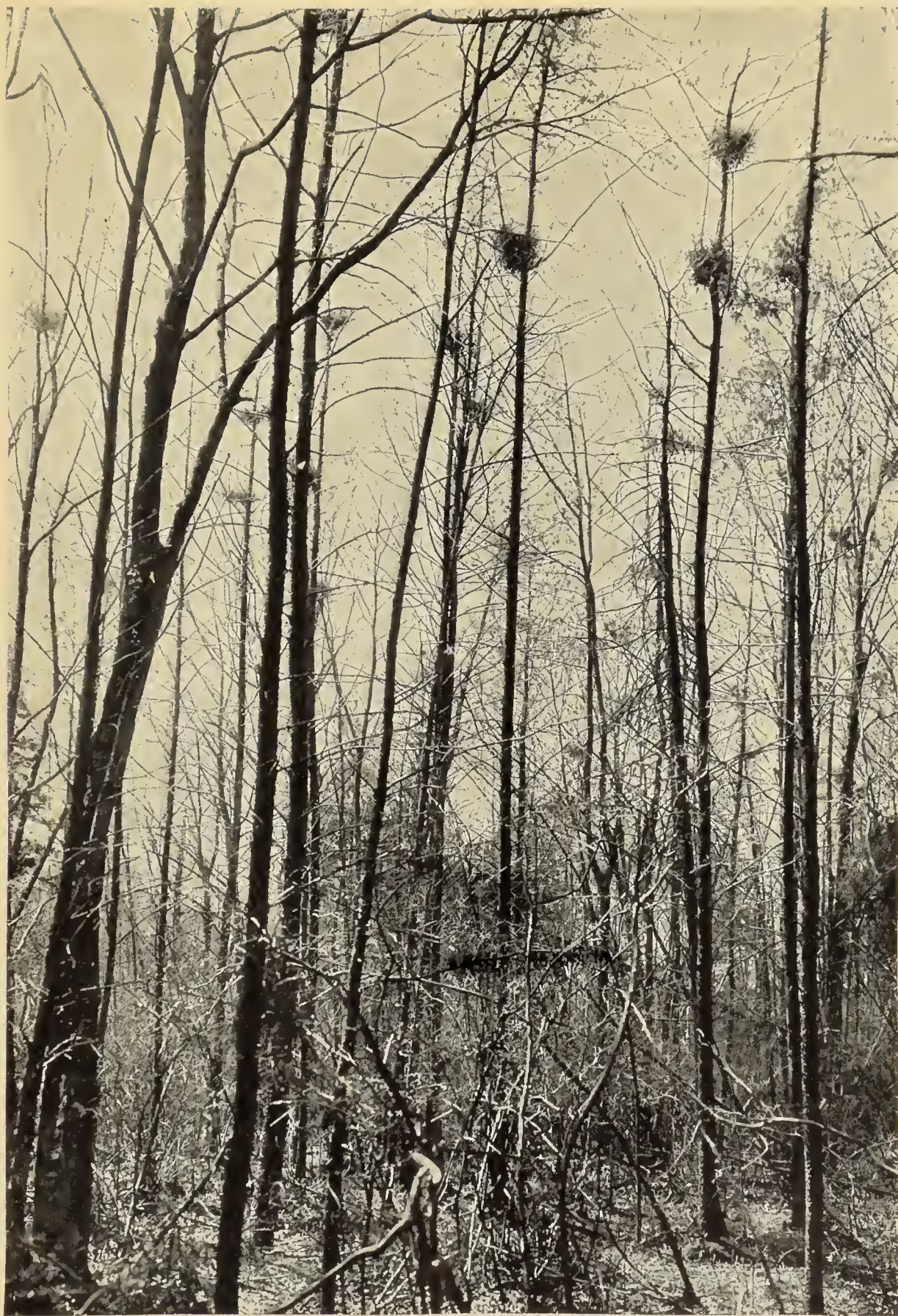
The trees grew closely and were generally

small in diameter. This made climbing difficult, and then the nests were built near the tops. We soon discovered it would be quite out of the question to attempt to photograph the nests from the trees themselves. Accordingly, my assistant, who was "great on climbing," began his climb, and succeeded in reaching the first nest only through his light weight and the tenacity with which he hugged the trunk. The cord then came into use, and with that and an old soft felt hat the eggs were carefully lowered to the ground for photographing—then followed the nest. Afterward the nest was hauled back and craftily pressed into place again.

Upon our entrance into their domain the birds had quickly left the vicinity with much loud squawking. Now a few, more bold than their fellows, carefully flew back, but quickly left when they discovered that the unwelcome visitors were still there. We explored still farther into the swamp and found a seemingly endless number of nests. Some trees contained but one, though rarely; usually there were four, five and six—sometimes more. From the tree tops, as far as one could see, nests were discernible, composed of dried branches and twigs; in size, perhaps, about a foot and a half in diameter. The nests were usually built from thirty to forty feet from the ground, and contained, at this time, all unhatched eggs and generally four in a clutch, rarely five. After photographing a sufficient number of specimens, we concluded to leave the rookery to the dutiful parents.

Our next trip occurred on the first of June, sufficient time having elapsed, we be-





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lieved, to have caused a decided change in the families of the herons. This day was as hot as the first—it seemed heat and herons were inseparable. The noise was apparently more deafening than on the previous trip, and we soon learned it was caused by their attention to their young and quarreling among themselves.

The small vines and swamp growth had taken quite a start, and the place presented even more the appearance of an undisturbed wilderness. The old birds were just as prone to leave the vicinity upon the entrance of undesirable intruders, except that they hovered rather longer above their young, and after many loud, penetrating squawks took themselves away to safer realms, leaving their children to our care.

On this trip, we found both eggs and young in the nests. The oldest had apparently celebrated their first birthdays about two weeks previously. The majority were very young in days, but had the instinct of their fathers, really frightening one with their loud cries and repeated thrusts of bills. This time we had to exercise more care in handling our subjects. Removing them from their nests, we carefully placed them in the hat and lowered them—the nests followed. It was an easy matter then to do the rest, and when the tenants and their homes had been returned, the day's work was finished.

Our third trip we planned for a date late enough to give the birds time to become more fully grown, yet not quite large enough to fly.

We left Boston on the first train on the morning of June the tenth. The usual heron weather prevailed—very hot. By this time the swamp presented a most tangled appearance, and we experienced considerable difficulty in pushing our way in and pulling our traps after us. The young had now attained a fair growth, and in many cases were sitting out upon the limbs near to the nests.

The usual diet is fish, and for the past three weeks this vicinity had been one vast boarding-house. What with the hot sun beating down upon the putrid fish and the dead young—for very many of them die through natural causes and falling from the nests—the odor was almost unbearable.

I found the older ones, which were more desirable for my purpose, had developed

a most remarkable sense of caution and agility since my last visit, and it taxed my brain to discover some means to attain my object. The hat would certainly not answer the purpose; even if one put them in, they would not stay put. One had to catch them first, and therein lay the difficulty. They were forewarned before my assistant had covered more than half the distance up the tree, and upon a closer approach the youngsters, with a remarkable agility, would spring from limb to limb, and in that way pass from tree to tree.

They used their long necks to great advantage, jumping and hooking their heads over the limb aimed at, holding on in that fashion while they clawed with their sharp nails until they gained the limb; and then the process was repeated with varying success, but with much speed, nevertheless. I finally resorted to shaking the smaller trees, and in that way succeeded in eventually getting one down. This method was repeated from farther up on the trees, and after much time we collected sufficient for our first sitting; and a most unwilling group of sitters it was. For a time they devoted all their endeavors to striving to get away; in the meantime keeping up a continual squawking. Some, more fortunate than the others, succeeded in getting free, and then commenced a foot race, with all the honors to the chased. It is almost incredible with what swiftness they covered the ground—over fallen, rotted logs, across mud patches, under masses of growing vines and briers, through it all they sped, trusting to bold speed rather than to the more timid hiding. Once the chase was started with the bird a few feet ahead, almost near enough to grasp, it was practically a sure thing that Master Heron was safe.

Yet, withal, they were apparently a timid party, and I thought I might be able to do much with patience and gentle handling. In this I was correct, and succeeded in actually training them in a while so they lost their fright and evinced practically no fear of their strange companion. They became, from the most unruly of subjects, the most tractable of models, strange as it may seem. One in particular became especially friendly, without the least sign of fear, remaining perfectly still in the positions I placed him in for a minute or more





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at a time. Before the work was finished I became much attached to the little ones, and wished that it were not impracticable to take some of them home with me. At this time we found no unhatched eggs, though many grim evidences of tragedies—the suspended bodies of the young hanging by the necks, with the heads caught in the crotches of the trees, a monument to over-zealous ambition.

When we had finished with our subjects, we placed them upon some of the lower limbs below their nests, and they lost little time in seeking their familiar quarters.

It might be interesting to know how I began the training so they would pose. This I did by placing their feet on a limb already chosen, and held them in that position for a little while, then released my hold very gently. This had to be repeated a number of times, until finally they ceased to struggle. When they learned that they could sit quietly without danger, they took very readily to the new conditions.

We experienced some difficulty, owing to the very soft and spongy ground, in adjusting the camera, and I would suggest to those attempting a like feat to provide themselves with some small, light boards, just large enough to answer for the legs of the tripod to rest on and yet broad enough to prevent the legs from settling down into the swamp. Of course, the exposures were generally long, the place being much shadowed by trees.

Each year, regularly, this colony of great black-crowned night herons appears and monopolizes completely their section of the swamp.

The nearest feeding ground is the salt-water creeks near the old town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, five miles from the rookery. Their diet is mainly small fish, caught by standing perfectly motionless on the flats in a few inches of water, watching keenly, without turning the head, for some luckless fish who may come within catching

distance. One quick dart, and it is over; and our friend, the heron, assumes the same statuelike pose—he is indeed a most patient fisherman.

Now, a word to the amateur who may pay a visit to a heron rookery. First, let me impress upon the mind that one must undergo some few hardships; yet, if you enjoy nature, you will be surprised with the amount of pleasure you will derive from your experiences. Attention to a few important details, and your trip should be successful. Wear old clothes; such ones as you can throw away when your work is completed, for it is more than likely that you will wish to. Rubber boots will usually be found desirable; some long, stout cord and an old soft hat, or something equivalent, for lowering eggs and young.

One should be a good climber, though that might be overcome by the use of a pair of lineman's climbers. If one is desirous of doing much of this work, it would be much better to have a pair made for one. This can be done at a slight cost, having the spurs longer so that they will penetrate through the bark and imbed firmly in the solid wood, thus saving a fall when the bark gives away. If the spurs are placed at the instep, and slightly under, with the spurs inward and downward, you need not fear the tallest tree.

Concerning the camera, by all means use one with which you can focus on your object carefully, without guessing. The size is a personal matter, although the large plate is a great advantage.

I can especially recommend this branch of photography to amateurs, feeling sure that they will find it interesting sport. By using care in focusing, good judgment in giving the proper length of exposure and exercising plenty of patience with your subject, who seems unduly modest about publicity, striking results can be obtained—ample to repay you fully for the trials and hardships endured.

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Gaylord Bros.  
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Syracuse, N. Y.  
PAT JAN. 21, 1908



